Allotment of blocks to ONGC and Reliance

2377. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that ONGC and Reliance Industries Limited have been allotted blocks by the Ministry for oil and gas exploration in the country recently; and

(b) if so, the details of the total investment in the oil and gas exploration and the gestation period for production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) Yes Sir, total 25 exploration blocks have been awarded to M/s. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and its consortium and 7 exploration blocks have been awarded to M/s. Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) under Sixth round of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP-VI).

(b) The committed investment under NELP-VI in the allotted blocks of ONGC is about US$ 617 Million and by RIL US$ 490 Million respectively. Exploration period for onland and shallow water blocks is 7 year and for deepwater offshore and frontier onland blocks is 8 years. Production depends on the success of exploration efforts in the awarded blocks.

Development of tea tourism circuit in North Bengal

†2378. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether an amount of Rs. 388.98 lakh has been sanctioned for the development of tea tourism circuit in North Bengal during the year, 2006-07;

(b) if so, the details of the tea gardens identified for the development;

(c) the number of gardens of Darjeeling hill areas identified under this scheme; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) whether Government propose to constitute a Monitoring Committee to oversee it?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. an amount of Rs. 388.98 lakh has been sanctioned for the development of tea tourism circuit in North Bengal during the year 2006-07. The tea gardens identified for the development under this project are Hilla Tea Garden, Mohua Tea Garden and Murti Tourist Complex.

(d) Implementation of projects is the responsibility of the State Government. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India monitors the progress of the projects from time to time through its field offices and review meetings. The balance fund for a project is released only on receipt of completion/utilization certificate in respect of the installment released earlier for it. There is a state level Monitoring Committee responsible for regular monitoring of projects.

Development of ports as cruise shipping stations

2379. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are coming up with a new policy to promote cruise tourism;

(b) if so, what are the objectives of the policy;

(c) whether any port is being developed as cruise shiping station;

(d) if so, the ports of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa which would have the stations; and

(e) if not, the reasons for developing a few ports in selective States in peninsular India?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (e) Ministry of Tourism in partnership with Ministry of Shipping has been promoting cruise tourism in the country both for domestic and overseas tourists. A high Power Steering Group under the chairmanship of Minister of Shipping with Minister of Tourism & Culture as co-chairperson has been set up to formulate cruise shipping policy. The Steering Group has recommended policy measures for issues related to smooth